



**MYSTIC
AQUARIUM**

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The Honorable Joe Gresko, Co-Chair
The Honorable Rick Lopes, Co-Chair
The Honorable Jan Hochadel, Vice Chair
The Honorable Christine Palm, Vice Chair
The Honorable Pat Callahan, Ranking Member
The Honorable Stephen Harding, Ranking Member
Committee on the Environment
General Assembly
State of Connecticut

Dear Co-Chairs Gresko and Lopes, Vice-Chairs Hochadel and Palm, and Ranking Members Callahan and Harding:

Mystic Aquarium writes in support of HB No. 6813, AN ACT AUTHORIZING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A SEABIRD AND SHOREBIRD PROTECTION PROGRAM.

The Connecticut shoreline is a seasonal home for shorebirds and seabirds providing habitat for nesting, nursery, feeding, and refuge from predators. Shorebird populations, including the Piping Plover, American Oystercatcher and Least Tern, which are both federally and state protected species, have exhibited decline in population as a result of human disturbance of shoreline habitat.

The requirement to establish an official State list of species in need of intervention to protect habitat, designating posted protection zones, and most critically, having a mechanism to enforce such protections as described in the HB 6813 would enhance our ability to protect and restore dwindling populations of these ecologically important species that are part of our natural heritage.

Mystic Aquarium has partnered with community organizations to monitor, protect, and conserve seabird and shorebird populations and habitat for decades. We have witnessed firsthand beachgoers ignoring, accidentally and intentionally, clearly defined areas with actively nesting bird pairs and newly fledged chicks. With an increase of human impact on critical seabird and shorebird habitat, the need to establish an enforceable seabird and shorebird protection program is necessary to ensure that these populations remain stable.

Thank you, in advance, for your support of HB 6813 and protection of seabirds and shorebirds.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'MaryEllen Mateleska'.

MaryEllen Mateleska
Senior Director of Education & Conservation

The mission of Mystic Aquarium, a division of Sea Research Foundation, is to inspire people to care for and protect our ocean planet through conservation, education and research.